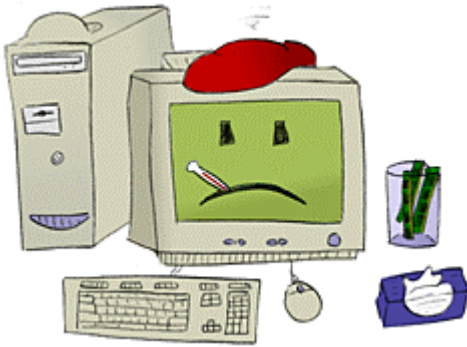
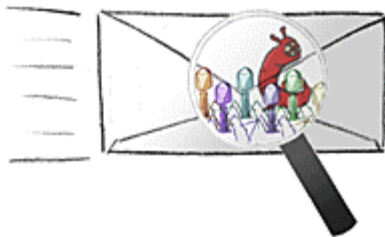


Security Quickie – Viruses and Worms



Ack. (Cough, cough.) Well, it's the cold and flu season. It seems that over the cold winter months almost everyone (ah- ah- ah-CHOO... sniff.) gets touched by some kind of virus. Are you taking your vitamins? Are you staying healthy? Remember the old adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"? That certainly holds true for your computer's health as well as your own. Working a little all-year-round to prevent virus and worm infections is far easier than dealing with even one serious network infection. It is important to be proactive to keep yourself healthy. Taking vitamins, washing your hands, eating a balanced diet (alas,

chocolate, I know thee too well...), and moderate exercise (ugh.) are all activities that can help. Similarly, having virus protection software, updating that software (weekly), and using good practices like those noted below can help greatly reduce the risk of the State networks becoming infected with nasty, icky viruses and worms.



When receiving e-mail, it's a good idea not to open attachments that you are not expecting. Also, scan attachments for viruses and worms before opening them. Some e-mail attacks propagate by being sent out to everyone on an infected computer's mail list. Just because your best friend apparently sent you a neat screensaver doesn't mean it is really from him or her.

Do you access e-mail via the Internet? That's kind of like working with lots of kids in the winter. You are bound to come into contact with some kind of icky, gooey bug sooner or later. It is simply a question of 'when' and not 'if'. To mitigate the risk in this situation do not have more than one e-mail system active at a time. This also includes dial-up issues. When dialed-up to an ISP, do not have your machine connected to the State network at the same time. Any infection from the ISP can go through your computer and rapidly spread to other systems you are connected to.

Remember to make sure you're virus protection is up to date. On average, there are over 500 new viruses or worms discovered every *month*. Do you really want to be unprotected? Update weekly.

Do not allow automatic preview of incoming messages in your e-mail inbox, as this can automatically release a virus or worm that is attached to the previewed message.

Limit the extent of File Sharing, if possible. (This is one of the ways the Nimda worm propagated and caused so many problems.) There are ways to still share network resources without having everyone's machine open to attack.

If you know you are sick, don't share your germs with others. Do not send out copies of the infected message or file. DO tell ITD Security and your network administrator or security contact that you think your computer is infected as soon as possible, however. A quick exchange of information and subsequent action can dramatically reduce the extent of an outbreak. (A false alarm is always better than an untreated infection.)

Scan all downloaded files and programs, as well as vendor programs (in email, downloads, and disks), before executing them. You never know where they've been, or what that file has been touched by...